

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM RABAT DTD 02 MAR 76 QUOTE

S E C R E T RABAT 1215

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)
SUBJECT: TALKING POINTS FOR ATHERTON'S CONSULTATIONS IN PARIS

REF: STATE 49354 (SECTO 06016)

FOLLOWING FOR SECRETARY'S APPROVAL ARE PROPOSED TALKING POINTS
FOR MY CONSULTATIONS IN PARIS WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 3:

--MY TRIP WAS NOT A "SAHARA MISSION." TIMING WAS KEYED
TO LONG-PLANNED TALKS THAT UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON WAS
SCHEDULED TO HAVE IN ALGERIA ON BILATERAL AND CIEC
QUESTIONS. WE HAD INDICATIONS THAT ALGERIANS WANTED
POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS AS WELL, AND SECRETARY THEREFORE
ASKED ME TO JOIN ROBINSON IN ALGERIA. HE ALSO ASKED ME
TO VISIT TUNISIA AND MOROCCO.

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--I EXPLAINED IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES THAT WE VIEWED THESE TALKS AS PART OF OUR PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS WITH MAGHREB GOVERNMENTS. IN ALL TALKS, I REVIEWED BILATERAL MATTERS AND BROUGHT THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED UP TO DATE ON THE CURRENT STAGE OF OUR MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKING EFFORTS.

--SAHARA SITUATION WAS OBVIOUSLY VERY MUCH ON THE MINDS OF ALL THE LEADERS I SAW. IN ALL CASES, I SAID I WOULD WELCOME THEIR ASSESSMENT AND ESPECIALLY THEIR THOUGHTS ON HOW THE SITUATION WILL EVOLVE. I MADE CLEAR WE DO NOT CONTEMPLATE A U.S. MEDIATION ROLE AND THAT OUR INTEREST WAS IN SEEING A RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION OR MOVES OF ANY KIND TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE ISSUE.

--MY FOCUS WAS ON THE EFFECT OF THE SAHARA DISPUTE ON US-ALGERIAN AND US-MOROCCAN RELATIONS AND ON STABILITY IN THE MAGHREB.

--IN ALGERIA, I ATTEMPTED TO DISABUSE BOUMEDIENE OF IDEA THAT USG WAS HOSTILE TO ALGERIA OR HAD ANY HAND IN THE MOROCCAN-SPANISH-MAURITANIAN TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT. I MADE CLEAR THAT WE WOULD NOT CHANGE OUR POLICY TOWARD MOROCCO BUT THAT OUR ARMS ASSISTANCE WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMITMENTS PREDATING THE SAHARA CRISIS AND THAT IT IS NOT DESIGNED TO UPSET THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE REGION.

--I GAVE BOUMEDIENE OUR JUDGMENT THAT THE REALITY OF THE MOROCCAN/MAURITANIAN TAKEOVER COULD ONLY BE CHANGED, IF AT ALL, BY PROTRACTED MILITARY EFFORTS WHICH WOULD BE COSTLY TO ALL CONCERNED INCLUDING ALGERIA AND WOULD RISK INTERNATIONALIZING THE PROBLEM. I URGED A CONTINUING SEARCH FOR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS AND SAID I WOULD DO THE SAME IN MOROCCO BUT MADE CLEAR THAT WE DO NOT THINK IT REALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT SUCH A SOLUTION COULD BE BASED ON ALGERIAN OBJECTIVE OF A UN-SPONSORED REFERENDUM.

--I ALSO SAID THAT WE VALUE OUR USEFUL BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA AND WANT THEM TO CONTINUE BUT THAT
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THIS DOES NOT DEPEND ONLY ON THE U.S. I URGED ALGERIA NOT TO LET ITS PERCEPTION OF U.S. POLICY IN THE SAHARA DISPUTE BECOME THE DOMINANT FACTOR IN US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS.

--MY PRINCIPAL POINTS WITH KING HASSAN WERE THE FOLLOWING:

(1) TO REAFFIRM OUR CONTINUING DESIRE TO BE HELP-

FUL TO MOROCCO WHILE AVOIDING THE APPEARANCE OF INJECTING OURSELVES INTO THE DISPUTE.

(2) TO EXPRESS CONCERN AT THE THREAT TO STABILITY AND THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE MAGHREB IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO FESTER.

(3) TO GET ACROSS THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO MOROCCO'S CONTINUING TO SEEK DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES THAT WOULD BE AT LEAST PARTIALLY RESPONSIVE TO THE SENSITIVITIES OF THE INTERESTED AND CONCERNED PARTIES.

--MY PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE ELEMENTS FOR A POSSIBLE RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE DO NOT AT THE MOMENT EXIST. MOROCCO'S "CLOSING OF THE DOSSIER" THROUGH CONSULTATION OF THE RUMP JEMAA, AND PROCLAMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE SAHARA HAVE FURTHER LOCKED BOTH SIDES IN.

--BOUMEDIENE SEEMS RESIGNED TO A PROLONGED PERIOD OF TENSION. WHILE INSISTING HE HAS NO INTENTION OF RESORTING TO OPEN HOSTILITIES, IT SEEMS CLEAR HE IS PREPARED TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE BASES AND SUPPORT FOR GUERRILLA EFFORTS TO KEEP THE POT BOILING. HIS PREMISE APPEARS TO BE THAT THIS WILL ERODE HASSAN'S SUPPORT BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY--THAT IF A SAHARA LIBERATION MOVEMENT IS SEEN TO BE VIABLE, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WILL DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM MOROCCO AND SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION.

--HASSAN REFLECTED DETERMINATION TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION IN THE SAHARA, BUT ALSO CONCERN ABOUT POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO HIS POSITION OF A PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WAR OF ATTRITION. HE SAID HE WOULD NOT PLAY THAT GAME AND WARNED THAT HE MIGHT BE FORCED TO ATTACK BASES IN ALGERIA
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WHICH WOULD MEAN WAR.

--FOR THE MOMENT IT APPEARS THAT THE GAME WILL BE PLAYED ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT, WITH BOTH ALGERIA AND MOROCCO SEEKING TO CONSOLIDATE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. HASSAN STARTS WITH SOME LEAD HERE AND IS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH ARAB SUPPORT AND WITH SOVIET CAUTION BUT IS WORRIED ABOUT LONGER RUN EROSION. HE HOPES THAT FRIENDS OF ALGERIA CAN BE PERSUADED TO PREVAIL ON BOUMEDIENE TO BE REALISTIC. HASSAN SAID HE SEES THE NEED TO FIND A FACE-SAVING FORMULA FOR BOUMEDIENE, AND THIS WAS PERHAPS THE MOST HOPEFUL INDICATION ON THE MOROCCAN SIDE. HE CLEARLY RULES OUT, HOWEVER, ANYTHING THAT WOULD BRING MOROCCAN RULE IN THE SAHARA INTO QUESTION.

--ON THE ALGERIAN SIDE, THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME CAUTION ABOUT CLOSING THE DOORS. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF AN INTENTION TO GIVE EARLY RECOGNITION TO THE SAHARA REPUBLIC, THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ALGERIA AS ITS PRINCIPAL MENTOR CAN AVOID THIS FOR LONG.

--THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS WHICH WILL INFLUENCE THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION SEEM TO BE THE FOLLOWING:

(1) THE VIABILITY AND STAYING POWER OF THE POLISARIO, WHICH IN TURN DEPENDS IN PART ON HOW IT FARES AGAINST MOROCCAN MILITARY IN DESERT TERRAIN ESPECIALLY DURING HOT SUMMER MONTHS, AND IN PART ON ALGERIAN DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE TO BACK IT MATERIALLY AND POLITICALLY. THERE IS NOT ANY GREAT POPULAR ENTHUSIASM IN ALGERIA FOR THIS FIGHT, BUT BOUMEDIENE HAS STAKED CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE ON IT.

(2) WHETHER OR NOT THE SOVIETS WILL ABANDON THEIR ATTEMPTS TO CARRY WATER ON BOTH THE ALGERIAN AND MOROCCAN SHOULDERS AND ENGAGE THEMSELVES MORE ACTIVELY IN SUPPORT OF ALGERIA.

(3) HOW CLEVER HASSAN CAN BE IN PLAYING THE INTERNATIONAL GAME, IN WHICH HE HAS BEEN REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL SO FAR AND HOW LONG HE CAN CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN DOMESTIC ENTHUSIASM AND SUPPORT FOR HIS SAHARA POLICY WHICH IS RUNNING HIGH.

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(4) WHETHER MAURITANIA, WHICH CLEARLY SEEMS TO BE THE ACHILLES HEEL OF THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, CAN BE SEPARATED FROM MOROCCO, EITHER THROUGH POLITICAL PRESSURE OR SUBVERSION OR GUERRILLA ATTACKS. END TALKING POINTS.

APPROVE.....

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